

Pre-K Teaching Times

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2011

Predictable Books Guarantee Reading Success

In This Issue

*Predictable Books
Guarantee Reading
Success*

*Phonological
Awareness*

Math Everyday

*What is the
"Purpose" of Small
Groups?*

Social Studies

*The Science Center
Becomes a
Campground*

Small Group

CLASS

Assessment

Call the BFTS office
and Pre-K consultant
on duty at 404-656-
5957. Pre-K
consultant contact
information can be
found on the BftS
website at
www.dec.ga.gov

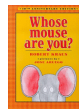
Learning to read should be a joyous experience for children. Many four year olds will leave Georgia's Pre-K Program reading. One way to help ensure that this happens is for teachers to expose children to many books that have rhyme, rhythm, and/or repetition. These "3 R" books provide opportunities for children to naturally predict what the next word, words, or sentence will be. Exposure to these types of books helps children immediately feel successful as a reader. Consider these types of predictable books when choosing books for young children:



Picture matching books – These books have illustrations that perfectly match the words on the page. Only one or two words, a phrase, or a sentence will appear on each page. Examples include: *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins, *Rain* by Robert Kalan or *I Went Walking* by Sue Williams.



Cumulative books – These books begin with one sentence, and the text builds by adding a sentence on each successive page while also returning to review all the previous sentences. Examples include: *I Know An Old Lady Who Swallowed A Fly* by Sims Taback, *The Napping House* by Don and Audrey Woods, or *Today is Monday* by Eric Carl.



Question/Answer books – These books ask a repetitive question and then provide answers with simple variation. Examples are: *Whose Mouse Are You?* by Robert Kraus, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Bill Martin or *Whose Footprints?* by Molly Coxe.



Repetitive Phrase books - These books usually have one to four phrases that repeat throughout the book. Examples are: *Good Night Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown, *Is Your Mama a Llama?* by Deborah Guarino, or *Silly Sally* by Audrey Wood.

Phonological Awareness Activities

Research suggests that the easiest forms of phonemic awareness for most children to acquire are those of rhyming and alliteration. Awareness of when words rhyme and of how to create rhyming words is an important prerequisite to using rhymes or word families to decode unfamiliar words.

A great way to develop sound patterns with young students is to use:

- Nursery rhyme books, poetry books, and storybooks with patterned rhymes
- Recorded music, song books, and books with finger plays
- Songs, poems, and nursery rhymes on charts
- Collections of tongue twisters and books that play with language

Read, say, or sing to children daily using material that contains rhymes, chants, alliteration, and language play. Morning Meeting and large group settings are great times in which to include these activities, but they can be planned during small group and transitions as well. Reread books with rhythmic patterns and engaging language, and select books that invite children's participation and contain phrases that are repeated frequently.

Math Everyday

Opportunities to expose children to math abound in the classroom. Math can be fun and is easily supported through math games. Below are some quick and easy ideas to expose children to math in the Pre-K classroom.

- ♦ Papa's Pizzeria: Use counting, geometry, and time management to make speedy pizza deliveries. Children can make pizzas, count the pizzas and the pieces, cut the pizzas into different shapes, and use the timer for a speedy delivery!
- ♦ Blocks can be used to create a safe path for the train to travel through a child-created tunnel.
- ♦ Use small group time to teach positional words and patterns such as "up, down, up, down," "top, side, front, top, side, front." Encourage children to use special orientations.
- ♦ Patterns usually are seen going left to right, but "growing patterns" should also be used. Stack linking cubes in towers and line up the towers in order of size. The cubes look like a staircase which is familiar to children. Increase the level of difficulty by presenting children with growing patterns that increase or decrease by more than one and start with number/quantities.
- ♦ Use scales and math vocabulary to talk about: equal/not equal, same/different, more/less, balanced/unbalanced.
- ♦ Children must have "hands-on" experiences to begin understanding math concepts. When they truly understand the concept taught, they can readily solve for unknown variables.

What is the “Purpose” of Small Groups?

The IQ Guide for Planning Instruction states, “Developmentally appropriate and **purposeful** small group activities should be planned daily.” What exactly is their purpose? Purposes for small group activities are as diverse as the activities themselves, but you must know your purpose before you can identify your content standard. Ask yourself, “Why is this group of children participating in this activity at this time?” “What do I want my students to learn from this experience?” Here are some of the most common purposes for small groups:

- To introduce a new skill, game, or media
- To observe/assess the development or application of a targeted skill
- To encourage dialogue between teachers and students and among students
- To break a large activity, such as experiments or classroom cooking, into smaller, more manageable groups

Below are links to websites that can help in planning purposeful activities for small groups:

<http://www.dec.state.ga.us/PreK/Planning.aspx> (Click on the P.R.I.D.E. link in the text at the top.)

<http://www.preschoolrainbow.org/activities-small.htm>

<http://prekinders.com/small-group/>

Social Studies

Pre-K teachers know that memorizing dates in history or reciting facts have little meaning for young children. It is more important to help children learn more about themselves and others in their world. This month help children apply the concepts they learn in the classroom to an understanding of their neighborhood. Children absorb an amazing amount of information by being exposed to a rich and varied environment. Take the class on a short fieldtrip around the neighborhood. Have children focus on observing their surroundings: the homes, hospital, fire-house, police station, churches, mosques, schools, playground, post office, etc. Talk about the variety of workers and the services provided in the community. Point out the different kinds of stores: groceries, dry cleaners, clothing stores. Have them brainstorm what each store might sell, where the merchandise comes from, who the customers might be, and why each is important. Let them know that every job is important and serves a need in the community.

Here are tips relating to talking to children about places in their environment:

- ◆ Identify direction and location (up/down, above/below, near/far).
- ◆ Ask questions about what he/she sees and finds.
- ◆ Identify and locate familiar places.
- ◆ Identify and explain street signs and house numbers.
- ◆ Discuss maps and model how to use them.

Additional Activities:

- ◆ Create a virtual fieldtrip by taking pictures of places in the community and create a PowerPoint to share with the class. This brings the community to the class without leaving the building.
- ◆ Read a book about neighborhoods and discuss similarities and differences between their neighborhood and the one in the book.
- ◆ Provide collage materials, paper, and crayons for children to make a map of their area.
- ◆ Place 22 props in a bag. Pass the bag around, have each child reach in the bag and select one prop for the class to see. Have the child guess who in the community might use this prop. (Ex: surgical gloves, hair dryer, stethoscope, cash register, etc.)

The Science Center Becomes a Campground

Teachers can help children develop an appreciation for nature and the outdoors by transforming the science center into a campground. Pitch a tent, build a campfire, and roast marshmallows (short sticks with cotton balls glued on the ends)! Introduce the center by adding camping equipment such as lanterns, flashlights, knapsacks with camping items for cooking and eating, walking canes, tackle boxes, flannel shirts, hats, gloves, etc. to the center.

Set the stage visually by creating a mural on the wall depicting trees, a stream, and mountains. Overhead create a scene of the night sky.

Post pictures of animals and birds in the area, and provide binoculars for children to use to search for them. Provide books identifying animals and birds of the forest, along with camping and nature magazines. Create a lotto game (picture and name of animal on cards) which allows children to name and match pictures of like animals and birds. Provide rocks, twigs, leaves, and insects to explore with magnifying glasses.

Provide several mirrors and leaves and discuss the concept of symmetry with the children. Allow the children to begin collecting things that come from trees (pine cones, nuts, acorns, twigs, bark, and cross sections cut from tree trunks). Provide balancing scales for weighing and tape measures and rulers for measuring the collected items. On a large piece of paper draw a map with hiking trails and post in the area. Reflect landmarks children will see on their hikes. Provide smaller maps, several compasses, and walkie-talkies for children to carry during hikes.

Take a real nature walk outdoors. After the walk, ask the children to describe what they saw on their hike and record their responses in a nature journal. Allow them to draw pictures showing what they saw. Place stuffed animals in the area, and place plastic ducks, fish, frogs, and water in the sensory table.

Help children make terrariums during small group time and place them in the camping area. Moss and ferns are perfect plants for terrariums for observing the water cycle. If possible, place the camping area near a window and place a bird feeder nearby so that children can observe birds. Children could make bird feeders to hang near the window.

Crickets from the local fishing supply store would provide authentic outdoor sounds. Pine scented air fresheners will fill the air with natural smells. Build a worm habitat. Play a nature sound CD in the background.

Set up an artificial Christmas tree, and attach birds to the branches. Encourage children to create and hang their own birds.

Ask your local forestry department to provide a special guest speaker to talk to the class about local forests, animals, camping, etc.

Suggested children's books dealing with camping and forests: *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell, *Good Night Owl* by Pat Hutchins, *Bat Loves the Night* by Nicola Davies, *Every Autumn Comes the Bear* by Jim Arnosky, *It's the Bear* by Jez Alborough, *In the Nest* by Anna Milbourne, *The Busy Little Squirrel* by Nancy Tafuri, *Who Lives in a Tree* by Susan Canizares, *Hiding in the Woods* by Maurice Pledger, *Just Me and My Dad* and *Just Camping Out* by Mercer Mayer.

CLASS

The Instructional Support Domain within the CLASS tool focuses on how teachers implement lessons and activities to promote cognitive and language development. It also focuses on how teachers use feedback to help children learn. This domain does not focus on the content of the curriculum or on the learning activities that are provided. Classrooms nationally and in Georgia score lower in this domain.

The last dimension under the Instructional Support Domain that we will focus on this month is Language Modeling, which is how teachers intentionally encourage, respond to, and expand on children's speech. Strong language modeling also consists of engagement in meaningful conversations between teachers and children.

Children's language expands when they are given opportunities to use the language that they know and when adults model more complex language. By hearing various uses and forms of language, children develop new language skills. These language skills are important to children's academic and social success.

To improve language modeling in the classroom a teacher can:

- Ask open-ended questions (ones that require more than a one-word response).
- Engage in conversations with and encourage conversations among children.
- Promote child-initiated language.
- Repeat what children say and expand on their responses.
- Use self and parallel talk (using words to describe what you are doing or what a child is doing).
- Use advanced language and connect it to something a child already knows.

Assessment

As the end of the first scoring period comes to a close, it is time for teachers to plan and schedule family conferences. Be sure to give families ample notification about the conference schedule. Encourage family members to participate in face-to-face conferences. Before the conference choose several portfolio artifacts that illustrate how a child has progressed to share with the family.

Remember, when writing comments on the progress report include positive comments that describe the child's accomplishments and needs. Check spelling and grammar before sharing forms with family members. Teachers should ask their director to read samples of their progress reports before conducting the first family conference.

Ensure the top of every child's progress report is completed. Parents should sign the bottom of the progress report and should receive a copy of the progress report.

WSO Updates

If a child leaves a Pre-K class, the teacher should ensure that all of his/her information has been entered in WSO before the child's record is archived. Once the information is entered, archive the child as soon as possible.

When a new student enrolls in Pre-K, the teacher should e-mail the child's full name and birthdate to PreKAssessment@dec.al.ga.gov and ask if the child has been in another WSO class. If the child was in another WSO class, DECAL will transfer the child's information to the new teacher.